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SIPDIS

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STATE FOR WHA/AND LPETRONI AND OES/PCI LSPERLING  
BRASILIA FOR JSTORY AND LSTONER  
COMMERCE FOR JANGLIN  
TREASURY FOR SGOOCH

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BL](#)  
SUBJECT: VICE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT DESCRIBES  
"COSMOCENTRIC-HOLISTIC" VISION

REF: LA PAZ 2431

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (SBU) Bolivia's vice minister of environment recently described a "cosmocentric-holistic" vision of environmental management, declaring that the state should direct a collective development process to ensure shared, broadly beneficial access to natural resources. The vice minister argued that indigenous groups should play a greater role in decision making and assume more responsibility for conservation and natural resource use. Threats to biodiversity and once pristine lakes and rivers reportedly top the vice minister's list of concerns, but the vice ministry appears to lack the organizational and financial capacity to effectively address environmental issues.

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A NEW, COSMOCENTRIC-HOLISTIC VISION  
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¶2. (SBU) Bolivian Vice Minister of Biodiversity, Forest Resources, and Environment Juan Carlos Iporre recently described a "cosmocentric-holistic" vision of environmental management, telling Econoff November 6 that the state should direct a collective development process to ensure shared, broadly beneficial access to natural resources. According to Iporre, the state should be a "development patron" committed to extending social participation to the environmental realm, with the aim of ensuring that indigenous groups and the public enjoy access to natural resources, derive benefits from their use, and participate in the "intellectual and spiritual development" of the individual and community in harmony with nature.

¶3. (SBU) The vice minister placed special emphasis on indigenous groups, arguing that they should play a greater

role in decision making and assume more responsibility for conservation and natural resource use. Iporre said he believed a "communitarian" model of decision making and environmental management was appropriate for Bolivia's new "social revolution," as it would allow for increased recognition of the special knowledge of indigenous groups and social movements. The vice minister highlighted Bolivia's remarkable biodiversity, noting its position among the 15 most biodiverse countries in the world, and argued that indigenous peoples' historical relationship to and intimate understanding of that diversity should enhance state-led efforts to sustainably harness natural resources for broad-based economic growth.

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COMMENT  
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¶4. (SBU) Threats to biodiversity and once pristine lakes and rivers reportedly top Iporre's list of concerns, but the vice ministry appears to lack the organizational and financial capacity to effectively address environmental issues. Iporre recognized, for example, that invasions of national parks and protected areas by landless peasants and other groups, including farmers and ranchers, pose serious threats to the survival of plant and animal species but lacked plans for stopping the incursions; having led a land-rights group in his hometown of Rurrenabaque, an isolated community in Bolivia's northwest, Iporre may have little inclination to confront the problem.

¶5. (SBU) Iporre raised no objection to the GOB's late August threat to "nationalize" national parks and stood silently by

while GOB officials talked of expelling non-governmental organizations and using the military to protect park borders (reftel); in response to critics' arguments that troops would do more harm than good, Iporre said nothing. As he waits, land invasions continue, and risks to national parks increase. Bolivian "colonists" have provided no evidence of enhanced environmental stewardship, and their land seizures will likely continue to threaten natural resources, particularly as conservation gives way to slash-and-burn agricultural techniques.

¶6. (SBU) Plans for rehabilitating Lake Titicaca and the badly polluted Pilcomayo River, meanwhile, are largely absent; Iporre appears more concerned with resolving internal organizational issues than with addressing pressing environmental matters. Many hope Iporre's "cosmocentric-holistic" vision allows for the natural resource conservation he claims to favor, lest the state's attempt to adopt "communitarian" principles destroy years of relatively successful environmental management. Some fear, moreover, that rapidly modernizing indigenous groups may lose patience with Iporre's "cosmocentric" vision, particularly if it fails to generate concrete change in their daily lives; for the indigenous, the landless, and the dispossessed, "cosmocentric" may not necessarily be the way to go.

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